MARVEL

5

COSMIC GHOST RIDER

PHILLIPS
VILANOVA
GRUNDETJERN

FRANK CASTLE HAS BEEN TO HELL AND BACK! HE WAS ONCE THE VIGILANTE KNOWN AS THE PUNISHER UNTIL HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION AS A SUPERNATURALLY EMPOWERED SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE. SINCE THEN, HE HAS ALSO SERVED AS A HERALD OF GALACTUS, THE RIGHT HAND OF THANOS AND A GUARDIAN OF THE GALAXY. AFTER LEAVING HIS MARK ACROSS ALL OF TIME AND SPACE, THE UNIVERSE HAS COME TO KNOW FRANK CASTLE AS...

COSMIC GHOST RIDER

"DUEL IDENTITY"

conclusion

COSMIC GHOST RIDER WAS FIGHTING A BAND OF SMUGGLERS IN SPACE WHEN HE WAS SUCKED INTO A MYSTERIOUS BLACK HOLE. HE WAS THEN SPLIT INTO SEVERAL SIMILAR BUT SEPARATE BEINGS, NONE OF WHOM WAS AWARE OF THE OTHERS' EXISTENCE. ONE OF THESE NEW BEINGS, FRANK, SOUGHT A QUIET LIFE ON A REMOTE ALIEN PLANET, WORKING FOR TAVERN OWNER MARLOW AND HIS DAUGHTER, AXELLE. BUT AFTER BOUNTY HUNTERS ATTACKED, MARLOW WAS KILLED AND FRANK WAS FORCED TO FLEE ALONG WITH AXELLE.

MEANWHILE, A SECOND COSMIC GHOST RIDER SPREAD VIOLENCE ACROSS THE GALAXY. HIS ACTIONS ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF BOUNTY HUNTER MONARK STARSTALKER AND THE HEROIC VALKYRIE. THE TWO COSMIC GHOST RIDERS FINALLY CROSSED PATHS ON A SPACE STATION. THEIR SUBSEQUENT BATTLE CAUSED A NEW BLACK HOLE TO OPEN, AND AFTER FRANK FELL THROUGH IT, HE WAS CONFRONTED BY A WHOLE HOST OF ADDITIONAL COSMIC GHOST RIDERS!

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SOMETHING IS JAMMING *ALL* OF OUR SIGNALS...

...COMMUNICATIONS ARE DOWN, FLIGHT PATH IS OFFLINE...

COULD THE *COSMIC GHOST RIDER* BE--?

NOT POSSIBLE, ULYSSES. HE'S TIED UP IN THE STORAGE HOLD.

RUN A DIAGNOSTIC ON THE ELECTRONIC CONFIGURATIONS THAT WE REPLACED BACK IN--

MONARK STARSTALKER! IN THE NAME OF THE SHI'AR EMPIRE, I HAVE TAKEN CONTROL OF YOUR SHIP!

WHAT THE--?

UNLOCK YOUR SECURITY SYSTEMS AND DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RESIST, MONARK, OR YOU *WILL* BE MET WITH *EXTREME* FORCE.

@$%&.

"I DID *EXACTLY* WHAT THE SHI'AR ASKED..."

...I FOUND THE COSMIC GHOST RIDER, ***AND*** I'M BRINGING HIM TO YOU ***ALIVE.***

BUT BEING FOLLOWED BY A ***CAPE-WEARING*** BABYSITTER WAS ***NOT*** A PART OF THE MISSION BRIEF.

THE AMBASSADOR HAS EXPRESSED CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR ***EXORBITANT FEE,*** BOUNTY HUNTER.

I'M THE ***INSURANCE.***

FINE...WE'RE ON THE SAME SIDE HERE. RIGHT... ***GLADIATOR?***

I DID THE JOB. I COLLECTED THE TARGET...

...SO THERE'S ***NO*** NEED FOR THE AMBASSADOR'S CONCERN.

LET ME ***SEE*** THE CARGO.

I DO NOT APPRECIATE HAVING MY WORK ***QUESTIONED.***

I'M A ***PROFESSIONAL,*** AND I ALWAYS COMPLETE MY--

WHAT...? HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE...?

VERY PROFESSIONAL INDEED, STARSTALKER.

FWSSSSH

HM?

DO NOT GO IN THERE FOR A BIT. IN FACT, I'D REALLY HAVE SOMEONE TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR PLUMBING ON THIS THING.

RIDER...

TWO AGAINST ONE.

YOU SHOULD'VE BROUGHT SOME BACKUP...

A MOON ON THE OTHER SIDE OF A BLACK HOLE.

I DON'T KNOW WHY WE'RE FIGHTING... I WAS REALLY STARTING TO FEEL GENUINE LOVE AND CONNECTION WITH YOU ALL...

TELL ME AGAIN THAT I'M NOT THE *REAL* COSMIC GHOST RIDER!

YOU'RE *NOT* THE REAL COSMIC GHOST RIDER.

YOU'RE NOT THE REAL COSMIC GHOST RIDER!

GREAT-- UNGH-- COMEBACK.

YOU'RE ALL MAKING ME REAL GLAD I NEVER HAD SIBLINGS.

ENOUGH!

ENOUGH

ALL OF YOU ARE GOING TO SHUT THE @#€% UP AND LISTEN TO ME.

NONE OF US ARE THE REAL COSMIC GHOST RIDER BECAUSE WE ARE ALL JUST PARTS OF THE SAME PERSON.

AT SOME POINT, WE WENT THROUGH A BLACK HOLE AND BECAME SEPARATED FROM ONE ANOTHER. FEAR, AGGRESSION, COWARDICE... ALL OF US JUST SOMEHOW SEPARATED FROM THE WHOLE.

AND WITHOUT ONE ANOTHER, WE ARE ALL DYING.

YOU SOUND *SO* STUPID RIGHT NOW.

PARTS OF A WHOLE? OKAY, *PROFESSOR*... WHATEVER YOU SAY!

I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHY I HAVE TO BE SUCH A PAIN IN THE #%€.

WILL YOU GUYS JUST ***TRY*** TO USE YOUR POWERS... I MEAN, YOUR ***FULL*** POWERS. BECAUSE, IF I'M RIGHT, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO.

THAT'S RIDICULOUS.

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH MY...

...POWERS?

WHAT DID YOU DO...?

I TOLD YOU THE *TRUTH.*

WE ARE *ALL* GETTING WEAKER THE LONGER WE STAY APART.

THEN... *COMBINE* OR WHATEVER... *FIX THIS.*

WE WILL *TRY*...AS SOON AS WE FIND OUR LAST MISSING PIECE.

ONE OF US WAS CAPTURED BY A BOUNTY HUNTER WITH A *TERRIBLY* OUTDATED HAIRSTYLE AND A METAL BIRD.

OUR POWERS MAY BE FAILING, BUT *TOGETHER*...

"...WE *OUTNUMBER* HIM."

NOT MY GOOD SIDE...

YOU DON'T *HAVE* A GOOD SIDE!

UNGH!

I REALLY DID WALK INTO THAT ONE, DIDN'T I?

YOU *WILL* RETURN TO THE SHI'AR EMPIRE TO ANSWER FOR YOUR CRIMES, RIDER.

HOW MANY PIECES YOU ARRIVE IN WILL BE UP TO YOU--

WHUMP

WHAT WAS THAT...?

HIYA...

...I WAS WONDERING IF YOU'D LIKE TO TAKE A MOMENT TO DISCUSS YOUR SHIP'S WARRANTY.

WHAT IS HAPPENING...?

HOW MANY OF THEM ARE THERE?

WE'RE OFFERING SOME REALLY LOW REFINANCING RATES AT THE MOMENT.

THEY'RE FORCING THE *AIR LOCK* OPEN.

HONEY...

...I'M HOME!

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
OOF!
GET OFF ME, YOU ANNOYING LITTLE--
POLLY WANT A--?
TEEP!
WHO THE %#&@ AM I SUPPOSED TO PUNCH...?

IT LOOKS LIKE...

LIKE *FRANK* BEAT US HERE.

IS FRANK CASTLE *ALWAYS* LIKE THIS, AXELLE?

I'M GETTING THE FEELING HE IS, YES.

WE *SHOULD* HELP.

AFTER YOU, VALKYRIE.

OI, RIDER...

YES?

YES?

YES?

WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO BE *PUNCHING...?*

NEVER MIND...

...I THINK I FIGURED IT OUT.

WE STILL NEED TO FIND A WAY TO REVERSE WHAT THE BLACK HOLE DID TO US. I CAN'T CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR MUCH LONGER...

WHY NOT JUST GO *BACK* INTO A BLACK HOLE?

UNFORTUNATELY, I DON'T THINK WE CAN JUST *FIND* ANOTHER BLACK HOLE.

BUT I *DID* FIND ALL OF YOU BY CREATING A POCKET OF INTENSE ENERGY IN SPACE WHEN I COLLIDED WITH THE *OTHER* ME... OR...PART OF ME...

...WHICH MEANS THAT IF WE COULD CREATE THAT MUCH ENERGY AGAIN--

YOU'RE GOING TO DRIVE THIS SHIP RIGHT INTO THAT SHI'AR SHIP SO THE ENGINES EXPLODE, AREN'T YOU?

I'M GOING TO DRIVE THIS SHIP *RIGHT* INTO THAT SHI'AR SHIP SO THE ENGINES EXPLODE...

...AND IT'S GOING TO BE AWESOME.

OR A FIERY AND PAINFUL DEATH FOR ALL INVOLVED... EITHER-OR.

FWSSSSSSH

OOF!

HEY!

FRANK, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TWO--?

YOU COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE *THAT* STUPID, FRANK...

YOU SAY STUPID, *I* SAY TRYING TO COMBINE ALL THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF ME BY CREATING A GIANT EXPLOSION... POTATO, POTAHTO.

FRANK, YOU HAVE *NO IDEA* IF THAT WILL WORK.

OF COURSE I DON'T. BUT I'M STILL GOING TO TRY, SO I NEED YOU TO GET EVERYONE OFF THE SHIP WHO *ISN'T* A COSMIC GHOST RIDER...AND FAST, PLEASE.

LET'S GO!

WHAT--?

NO TIME, VALKYRIE... GET OFF THE SHIP *NOW.*

AND TAKE THE SHI'AR WITH YOU.

COME ON.

YOU...

YEAH, SAVING *YOUR* LIFE ISN'T EXACTLY WHAT I WANTED TO BE DOING TODAY EITHER.

BUT THIS SHIP IS ABOUT TO BLOW AND...

...AND YOU'LL BE *ON* IT.

WHAT ARE YOU--?

NO...

YOU PIECE OF--WHY THE HELL WOULD YOU DO THAT?!

ARGH!

YOU BIT MY EAR.

HAVE FUN!

TEEP.

KRSSSSSH

HELP!

HELP!

AXELLE?

AXELLE?

THOOOOM

NO... AXELLE!

I'M SO SORRY.

SORRY FOR WHAT...?

YOU *PUNCHED* A MEMBER OF THE SHI'AR IMPERIAL GUARD, VALKYRIE.

I DON'T THINK YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO APOLOGIZE FOR.

FRANK... AXELLE...

...YOU'RE *OKAY?*

"I'M *WHOLE* AGAIN..."

FUELING STATION X987.

...AND IT SEEMS LIKE MY POWERS ARE FINALLY STARTING TO RETURN TO NORMAL.

AND YOU'RE *SURE* YOU'RE NOT FEELING ANYTHING... *WEIRD?*

YOU *DID* GO THROUGH A MASSIVE EXPLOSION WITH MULTIPLE GHOST RIDERS AND LOTS OF COSMIC ENERGY.

I'M *FINE,* FRANK. I THINK *YOU* SHOULD WORRY A BIT MORE ABOUT THE *SHI'AR...*

SHI'AR...PI'MAR. GLADIATOR SAID WE COULD WORK SOMETHING OUT...LIKE A *COMMUNITY-SERVICE* THING.

I'LL CLEAN SOME GARBAGE AROUND THE EMPIRE, AND *ALL* WILL BE FORGIVEN.

BUT YOU... AXELLE...I DON'T KNOW HOW I COULD *POSSIBLY* APOLOGIZE TO YOU. I BROUGHT YOU INTO THIS...YOUR *FATHER--*

YOU SAVED ME FROM A GIANT EXPLOSION...THAT BUYS YOU AT LEAST *SOME* FORGIVENESS.

BUT IF YOU *REALLY* WANT TO SAY YOU'RE SORRY...

...I *COULD* USE SOME TRANSPORTATION.

YOU WANT MY *BIKE?*

YOU WANT MY *FORGIVENESS?*

FINE. JUST...

"...TAKE CARE OF HER."

THE END?

COSMIC GHOST RIDER

Greetings, fellow riders of the cosmos! Since this is our final issue, we wanted to be sure to share some of the letters we received from you all over the course of the series. So, let's dive in...

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I want to thank the creators of this series for bringing Cosmic Ghost Rider back. Frank Castle is one of my favorite characters. As the Punisher, he is great. As the Cosmic Ghost Rider, he is awesome. I'm hoping for more crazy zaniness and quirky quotes like there was in the bonus story of issue #1. Very excited for what is to come. Keep up the good work, COSMIC GHOST RIDER crew!

Your Friend,
Jason

Thanks for the encouragement, Jason! We hope the remainder of the series lived up to your enthusiasm for issue #1.

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Stephanie,

I thought this might be pretty good based on the creative team. I was right! CGR is a hit--maybe we should see about getting him (and Beta Ray Bill?) back on GOTG?! But hey--a question: With Robbie Reyes going all All-Rider now...isn't he the/a Cosmic Ghost Rider? We've seen him pilot that car through space, even from one dimension to another.

Cheers,
AJS

Robbie's All-Rider status is a bit different from Cosmic Ghost Rider. But a crossover between the two sure might be fun, wouldn't it?

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Hello!

I got very tired of Marvel events--and comics in general. So it was a mistake to walk into the LCS and stumble across the new issues #1 and #2 of COSMIC GHOST RIDER. I loved the character in the past and felt the need to make an impulse buy. So far, the first two issues are fantastic! My only fear, at this point, is this series being wrapped up in a Marvel event. So I write to ask that this amazing creative team stays for a long time and that they be left alone to tell their own story event-free.

Please?

Thanks,
Zad

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

We like to think this series was an event unto itself, Zad! I'm glad we could tempt you to make a return to Marvel. And hopefully, this team can make a return in the near future to fuel further impulse buys!

That said, if you'd like to see more of Cosmic Ghost Rider and Axelle, be sure to email us at MHEROES@MARVEL.COM. Don't forget to mark your messages "okay to print" for a chance to see them answered in future issues!

On behalf of the entire creative team and myself, thank you all for taking this ride along with us--we'll see you on the spaceways!

Martin

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Cosmic Ghost Rider really seemed like a departure from the kinds of characters and stories I've worked on in the past, so I was thrilled to get the chance to pen a Frank Castle story and step outside of my comfort zone. To that end, I wanted to make *FRANK* step out of his comfort zone as well by facing...himself! Terrifying stuff...

I'm grateful to our wonderful editor, Martin Biro, for helping us tell such a fun, cosmic story, and to the creative team I got to be a part of. Guiu Vilanova, Juann Cabal, KJ Díaz and Travis Lanham truly made this story come to life.

Hopefully we will see you in the cosmos again soon.

Stephanie